



CHLAMYDERA MACULATA, *Gould.*

Spotted Bower-bird.

Calodera maculata, Gould in Proc. of Zool. Soc., Part IV. p. 106, and Syn. Birds of Australia, Part I.

Chlamydera maculata, Gould, Birds of Australia, 1837, Part I. cancelled.

THIS species, which is nearly allied to the Satin Bower-bird, is especially interesting, as being the constructor of a bower even more extraordinary than that of the latter, and in which the decorative propensity is carried to a far greater extent. It is as exclusively an inhabitant of the interior of the country as the Satin Bower-bird is of the brushes between the mountain ranges and the coast; and though in all probability it has a wide range over the central portions of the Australian continent, the only parts in which I have observed it, or from which I have ever seen specimens, are the districts immediately to the north of the colony of New South Wales. During my journey into the interior I observed it to be tolerably abundant at Brezi on the river Mokai to the northward of the Liverpool Plains: it is also equally numerous in all the low scrubby ranges in the neighbourhood of the Namoi, as well as in the open brushes which intersect the plains on its borders; still, from the extreme shyness of its disposition, the bird is seldom seen by ordinary travellers, and it must be under very peculiar circumstances that it can be approached sufficiently close to observe its colours. It has a harsh, grating, scolding note, which is generally uttered when its haunts are intruded on, and by which means its presence is detected when it would otherwise escape observation: when disturbed it takes to the topmost branches of the loftiest trees, and frequently flies off to another neighbourhood. I found the readiest way of obtaining specimens was by watching at the water-holes where they come to drink; and on one occasion, near the termination of a long drought, I was guided by a native to a deep basin in a rock, which still held water from the rains of many months before, and where numbers of these birds, as well as Honeysuckers and Parrots, were constantly assembling throughout the day. This natural reservoir had probably been but seldom, if ever, visited by the white man, being situated in a remote mountain, and presenting no attraction to any person but a naturalist. My presence was evidently regarded with suspicion by the visitants to the spot; but while I remained lying on the ground perfectly motionless, though close to the water, their thirst overpowering their fear, they would dash down past me and eagerly take their fill, although an enormous black snake was lying coiled upon a piece of wood near the edge of the pool. Of the numerous assemblage here congregated the Spotted Bower-birds were by far the shyest of the whole, yet six or eight of these, displaying their beautiful necks, were often perched within a few feet of me. The scanty supply of water remaining in the cavity must soon have been exhausted by the thousands of birds that daily resorted to it, had not the rains, so long withheld, soon afterwards descended in torrents, filling every water-course and overflowing the banks of the largest rivers: I remained at this, to me, interesting spot for three days.

In many of its actions and in the greater part of its economy much similarity exists between this species and the Satin Bower-bird, particularly in the curious habit of constructing an artificial bower or playing-ground. I was so far fortunate as to discover several of these bowers during my journey to the interior, the finest of which I succeeded in bringing to England, and it is now in the British Museum. The situations of these runs or bowers are much varied: I found them both on the plains studded with Myalls (*Acacia pendula*) and other small trees, and in the brushes clothing the lower hills. They are considerably longer and more avenue-like than those of the Satin Bower-bird, being in many instances three feet in length. They are outwardly built of twigs, and beautifully lined with tall grasses, so disposed that their heads nearly meet; the decorations are very profuse, and consist of bivalve shells, crania of small mammalia and other bones. Evident and beautiful indications of design are manifest throughout the whole of the bower and decorations formed by this species, particularly in the manner in which the stones are placed within the bower, apparently to keep the grasses with which it is lined fixed firmly in their places: these stones diverge from the mouth of the run on each side so as to form little paths, while the immense collection of decorative materials, bones, shells, &c., are placed in a heap before the entrance of the avenue, this arrangement being the same at both ends. In some of the larger bowers, which had evidently been resorted to for many years, I have seen nearly half a bushel of bones, shells, &c., at each of the entrances. In some instances small bowers, composed almost entirely of grasses, apparently the commencement of a new place of rendezvous,

were observable. I frequently found these structures at a considerable distance from the rivers, from the borders of which they could alone have procured the shells and small round pebbly stones ; their collection and transportation must therefore be a task of great labour and difficulty. As these birds feed almost entirely upon seeds and fruits, the shells and bones cannot have been collected for any other purpose than ornament ; besides, it is only those that have been bleached perfectly white in the sun, or such as have been roasted by the natives, and by this means whitened, that attract their attention. I fully ascertained that these runs, like those of the *Satin Bower-bird*, formed the rendezvous of many individuals ; for, after secreting myself for a short space of time near one of them, I killed two males which I had previously seen running through the avenue.

Crown of the head, ear-coverts and throat rich brown, each feather surrounded with a narrow line of black ; feathers on the crown small, and tipped with silvery grey ; a beautiful band of elongated feathers of light rose-pink crosses the back of the neck, forming a broad, fan-like, occipital crest ; all the upper surface, wings and tail of a deep brown ; every feather of the back, rump, scapularies and secondaries tipped with a large round spot of rich buff ; primaries slightly tipped with white ; all the tail-feathers terminated with buffy white ; under surface greyish white ; feathers of the flanks marked with faint, transverse, zigzag lines of light brown ; bill and feet dusky brown ; irides dark brown ; bare skin at the corner of the mouth thick, fleshy, prominent, and of a pinky flesh-colour.

Both sexes, when fully adult, are adorned with the rose-coloured frill ; but the young birds of the year, both male and female, are without it.

The Plate represents the bower, with two birds, a male and a female, all of the natural size.